

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-7, and 12 are now pending in this application for which applicants seek reconsideration.

Application Status

Although the PTO record officially shows the Office Action as final, the Detailed Action on page 2 states that it is made non-final (essentially because the examiner withdrew the allowability of claims 8-11). Accordingly, applicants treated this Office Action as a non-final Office Action.

Amendment

New claim 12 directed to the details of Fig. 9 has been added. No new matter has been introduced.

Art Rejection

Claims 1-3, 6, and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Akio (USP 6,111,962) in view of Yoshino (USP 7,054,448) and Yanagawa (USP 5,233,664).

Applicants traverse this rejection because the applied references still would not have disclosed or taught the characteristic correction control aspect set forth in independent claim 1.

Applicants previously amended independent claims 1 and 2 to incorporate the characteristic correction control feature of changing the directivity of an array speaker while the sound pickup device is picking up sound so that the sound pickup device picks up sound reflected off of different areas of the wall surface or the sound reflection board.

In response, the examiner alleges that Yanagawa would have taught the above feature. Applicants disagree with the examiner's assessment because (1) the examiner fails to provide any basis for reflecting sound off of different areas of the wall, and (2) none of the applied references disclose changing the directivity so that sound waves bounce off a different area of the wall.

Speaker arrays that direct sound waves to a wall surface can suffer from unexpected variations of acoustic characteristics, particularly when the sound waves are focused to a small area. In this respect, independent claims 1 and 2 provide a way for coping with the above problem by changing the directivity of the array speaker while the sound pickup device is picking up sound so that the sound pickup device picks up sound reflected off of a different area of the wall surface or the sound reflection board that is more acoustically favorable. In other words, these claim call for refocusing sound waves to a more favorable area of the wall. This

refocusing to a different area can be used to determine whether better acoustic properties can be achieved with the different area.

When forming a focal point of sound, sound waves must be concentrated on a small area, which in turn causes relatively large variations of reflection characteristics. According to the claimed invention, the negative influence of focusing sound waves to a small area can be eliminated by changing the directivity of the array speaker, namely refocusing to a more favorable area. Applicants submit that none of the applied references would have disclosed or taught this aspect of the present invention.

Conclusion

Applicants submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicants urge the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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DATE

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